

SPRING/SUMMER 2017

COLUMBIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
ALUMNI MAGAZINE

NETWORKING | 6
OPPORTUNITIES

ROOTED IN | 11
CULTURE

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PROGRAM



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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Engage with us on social media or send us an email at CSU-Alumni@columbiasouthern.edu
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The true story of an American Entrepreneur, with over 100 practical lessons that will change your life and your career

WINNING THE GAME OF LIFE

BY CHANTELL MAYES COOLEY

“This book will change your life.”

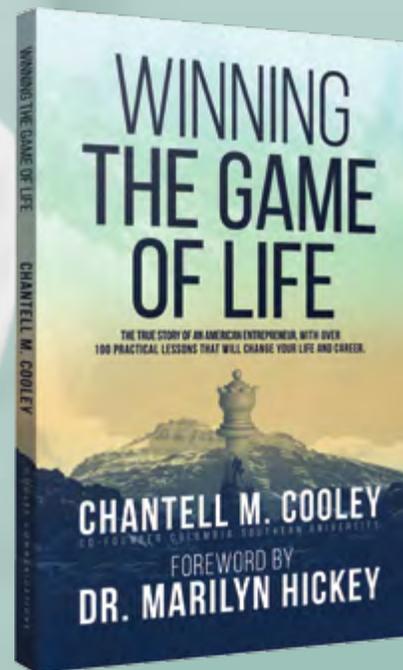
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Beloved readers,

2016 seems to be a distant blur as 2017 came fast and we are now facing spring. I love the promise and fresh perspective this season brings: new life, boundless potential and beauty everywhere you look. It's hard to be negative when the world is covered with so much sunshine.

The CSU Alumni Association and regional chapters grow every day as we continue to see students cross over into proud alumni. This growth is exciting! I always enjoy meeting you all at our networking socials, graduation and connecting with you through our social media channels. Our alumni accomplish great things and we are so proud of each and every one of you.

We love hearing what you are up to in your careers, families and communities. Hearing your stories of growth and accomplishment never gets old. You have refused to settle at status quo and instead choose to reach for your dreams. Your hard work is paying off!

The most unique part of the CSU community is that our Knights are literally all over the world but still share a common bond and enjoy connecting with one another. Through social media, clubs and organizations, SAE sponsored events and your own local meet-ups, you have proven that an online education does not have to lack school pride and camaraderie.

As always, I would love to hear from you! Please share any ideas you have to further promote engagement with your alumni community. If you have a story idea or have accomplished something you would like to share in a future publication, connect with me.

None of this is possible without each and every one of you. Together, we can rise to exciting heights.

Happy Reading,

Libby Reilly, Editor-in-Chief



LETTER FROM THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

Hello fellow Knights.

Once again, I am honored to be able to address you as your alumni association president.

For those of you who are keeping up with CSU on social media, you will notice more and more regional alumni associations being populated. This is such wonderful news and one that each of you should be proud of.

There is nothing more important than supporting the same institution that granted us our degrees. As your president, I accepted the challenge as an alumnus and, in addition, took on the role as an adjunct professor. In both instances, I was very excited about filling the roles. Over the years, I have purchased shirts and sports apparel that represent CSU. I have been approached and asked about the university and spoke quite proudly of the curriculum and cost of the courses. In addition, I am very proud of how far we have come in the 24 years since our inception. This road is one that should fill us all with pride.

In January, I had the opportunity to teach some English classes at a private school in Spain and was very proud to wear my CSU shirt and tie. I was questioned about the university and I think the students may have been more excited about the location on the beach than the opportunity to obtain the degree, but in either case, they now know about us.

I would encourage every one of you to take the opportunity to speak of CSU and what it has to offer. We are the voices of success! We are the examples of hard work paying off.

To every one of my fellow alumni, I wish you success with your upcoming endeavors. You will prevail as Knights of CSU.

With utmost honor and pride,

Ralph Blessing, CSU Alumni Association President

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

2017 IS THE YEAR OF GROWTH & MOMENTUM!

You asked for it and now it's here! With more than 3,200 members in the Alumni Association, CSU is proud to unveil the newest alumni chapters.

First of all, congratulations on joining the CSU Alumni Association! You have taken an important step in connecting with fellow CSU alumni and you now have the opportunity to further your alumni experience by joining your regional alumni chapter. Regional alumni chapters were developed to provide our alumni a more personal experience where they can network face to face with fellow alumni. In addition to attending networking events hosted by CSU, the regional chapters will have the opportunity to plan and host their own events that are determined by their membership.

You may be asking why networking is so important. The saying goes "all jobs are temporary." The days of spending an entire career with only one employer are long gone and many CSU alumni are exploring new opportunities. Networking with your fellow alumni provides you with an inside track to new jobs and promotions. In addition, you will find that you develop new friendships and contacts that can last a lifetime.



Atlanta, GA Chapter

Chicago, IL Chapter

Columbus, OH Chapter

Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX Chapter

Gulf Coast Chapter

Hawaii Chapter

Houston, TX Chapter

Los Angeles, CA Chapter

Nashville, TN Chapter

New York Chapter

Norfolk, VA Chapter

Orlando, FL Chapter

Richmond, VA Chapter

San Antonio, TX Chapter

Vietnam Chapter

If a chapter has not been formed in your area, feel free to join the chapter nearest you or let us know where we should consider growing next! More chapters will be established in 2018. ■



**JOIN
A CHAPTER
NEAR YOU**

To join one of these chapters, fill out the membership form on the Alumni section of the CSU website. Don't forget to also join the chapters' Facebook group to stay up-to-date on all chapter happenings!



EVENTS

Mark your calendar!

APRIL 24 SAN ANTONIO, TX



Monday, April 24, 2017
President Robert Mayes heads to San Antonio, TX to meet CSU Knights and honor the 2017 DEAC Outstanding Graduate and Famous Alumni recipient.

JUNE 20 DENVER, CO



Monday, June 20, 2017
CSU heads to Denver, CO. This is in conjunction with **The American Society of Safety Engineers Conference (ASSE)**.



New friends gather at the SAE networking social in Tennessee hosted by the Nashville chapter.



CSU Knight gets to know fellow classmates and CSU representatives at the networking social in Baton Rouge, LA.



Knights Jenna Collier, Grant Black and Wallace Edmondson network at the December event in Atlanta.

SEND US YOUR CSU STORY!

Do you have a story idea for future editions of the CSU Alumni Magazine?

Submit your story online at Alumni.ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Contact-us or email CSU-AlumniMagazine@ColumbiaSouthern.edu

CONNECT

Did you begin your time at Columbia Southern University because of the flexibility of completely online courses but at times longed, and maybe still long, for the involvement and engagement that comes with a traditional, brick and mortar campus?

Lucky for you, there are a plethora of ways to get involved and connect with fellow knights! Even as an alumnus, you can connect through clubs and organizations based on merit or common interests and through various social media platforms!

Read on to learn more about the “extracurricular” ways to get involved as a CSU Knight, then head on over to columbiasouthern.edu/community/alumni/organizations to join the organization that speaks to you!

JOIN THE ORGANIZATION THAT FITS YOU BEST

ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Community/Alumni/Organizations

Student Veterans Association	Our SVA chapter is open to students, alumni, active duty, retired, and military family members!
American Criminal Justice Association	ACJA is a group of individuals who work in the criminal justice system or are taking courses in the criminal justice track.
The Order of the Sword and Shield	An academic and professional honor society dedicated to homeland security, information systems security, criminal justice, criminal justice administration, fire science, fire administration and emergency services management.
CSU Knights Run	The club is for anyone who just wants to get their feet moving. Whether you’ve never before classified yourself as a “runner” or are gearing up for your umpteenth marathon, members will have access to schedules, tips, forums, and the ability to connect with others, completing challenges and building momentum.
CSU Knights Read	This cyber club is for those who enjoy reading more than just textbooks. Members can share their favorite book or authors, discover new titles, and participate in guided discussions.
The National Society of Leadership and Success	This is a merit-based honor society with membership by invitation only. CSU is one of more than 200 esteemed chapters nationwide.
Delta Epsilon Tau Honor Society	This honor society is for alumni with a bachelor’s or master’s degree.

Students and alumni can also connect through various social media channels in a safe and monitored environment!

Facebook Closed Group

This dedicated closed group for students and alumni encourages conversation, questions and connections.

CSU LinkedIn Group

A way for students and alumni to connect with each other and CSU representatives on LinkedIn.

Facebook Closed Groups for Regional Chapters

Once you join a regional chapter of the CSU Alumni Association, you will be invited to join the private Facebook group to connect with local Knights.

“Being a part of a regional chapter has allowed me to create great connections with fellow alumni in my area!”

WHAT ARE THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION CHAPTERS UP TO?

12.2.2016

The Atlanta Chapter held their annual officer’s dinner at Maggiano’s Little Italy in Buckhead. In attendance: Charlene Brown, president; Benjamin Goings, vice president; Suzette Porter, secretary; Andie Bills, CSU alumni relations coordinator; and Robert Cunningham, CSU career development counselor.

12.3.2016

CSU hosted a Mix, Mingle and Jingle for both students and alumni at The Iberian Pig in the Atlanta area. Atlanta Chapter member, Pamela Garr was able to promote and speak with fellow chapter members about her annual New Year’s Eve charity, Putting on the Glitz III.



12.17.2016

Gulf Coast Chapter member, Gamel Garrison organized a Christmas party for the group at T.P. Crockmiers in Mobile, Alabama. The party consisted of more than 13 members.

1.6.2017

CSU hosted a Student & Alumni Networking Social in Tampa, Florida to allow those in the Orlando Chapter to get to know one another.



1.8.2017

CSU hosted a Student & Alumni Networking Social in Orange, California to allow those in the Los Angeles, California Chapter to get to know one another.

1.30.2017

Gulf Coast Chapter member, Gamel Garrison began organizing a cruise in June 2017 for chapter members. She is currently working with Suzette Porter from the Atlanta Chapter to also include members of that chapter. In February, the ladies recommended and invited members of the Nashville Chapter to come along!

2.18.2017

Gulf Coast Chapter members, Gamel Garrison and Marlon Foster, met up at the Orange Beach Seafood Festival and Car Show in Orange Beach, Alabama. (pictured below)



As you can see, in just a short amount of time, chapter members are starting to break out of their shells and have begun to create great connections. Whether something as simple as a “hi” on the Facebook group page or organizing an elaborate cruise, life-long friendships are on the cusp of blooming. Regional chapters are a great way to get involved and get to know those fellow Knights in your area! You never know what doors are waiting to be opened.

GAIN RELEVANT EXPERIENCE THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

Written By: Elizabeth Mimms



It can be difficult to understand how to bridge the gaps between education and experience in order to move closer to your desired career. One way to gain

experience is through volunteering. Volunteering not only makes you feel good, but it also looks good on a resume. In addition, you may utilize volunteer experiences to gain crucial knowledge, skills and abilities sought after by employers. Volunteering also allows you to expand your connections and networking circles.

This article will help you identify areas of competencies to improve upon, find organizations in need of assistance, set realistic expectations about personal commitment and provide tips for how to connect and use volunteer experiences as a resume booster.

Volunteer work, whether in addition to a current job or as an activity in between jobs, shows an employer that you are willing to try new experiences, be involved in your community and generally demonstrates a willingness to take initiative and make things happen.

Mentioning volunteerism-related skills that are relevant to the professional world is one of the best ways to position yourself for a new career field.

STEP 1 >>

Identify what experience or knowledge you want to gain

Volunteering has many rewards. It allows you to try on different organizations and roles and helps you build expertise without job-hopping. While volunteering is not the same as being on staff, it can expose you to the work of an organization in a deeper way than becoming a member or conducting an informational interview with an employee. More importantly, volunteering can aid in gaining valuable, relevant experience. Whatever expertise you want to develop, there is likely an organization or project already in progress that could help you do it. For example, nonprofits that use volunteers often need a hand coordinating their activities (community clean-ups, weekly volunteer nights and staffing big fundraisers are common examples).

STEP 2 >>

Identify organizations seeking the utilization of knowledge, skills or abilities you seek to increase

To assist you in finding a volunteer opportunity in your area, we recommend three websites you can use to search and contact organizations for volunteer opportunities:

- **Volunteermatch.org:** Volunteer Match aims to build services that overcome the barriers that keep volunteers and nonprofits from finding each other, working together and developing strong relationships.
- **211.org:** United Way supports this nationwide social services directory. Use this guide to identify potential volunteer opportunities or find organizational websites listing paid positions.
- **Idealist.org:** The mission of Idealist is to close the gap between intention and action by connecting people, organizations, ideas and resources.

Mentioning volunteerism-related skills that are relevant to the professional world is one of the best ways to position yourself for a new career field.



CAREER SERVICES

CSU Career Services is available to students and graduates. Services include personal career counseling via email, phone and Skype. Appointments are made through CareerQuest, our password protected database.

877.297.6192 | CareerServices@ColumbiaSouthern.edu



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STEP 3 >> Determine your parameters

How much time can you devote to volunteering and for what duration? Are you available during the day or just evenings and weekends? Knowing exactly what you are able to commit to will make it easier to search for the right fit. Another step in determining your parameters is to let your volunteer supervisor know your career goals. When the supervisor knows what most interests you, they may be better able to offer experiences to satisfy those interests.

Remember that the goal is professional development. As a volunteer, ensure that you are always consistent, responsible and dependable. Show up on time and fulfill your responsibilities in an effective manner. Your supervisor may be a good source for writing a letter of recommendation one day. In addition, be flexible. Your volunteer experience may not always be what you expected. With this in mind, be willing to do what needs to be done and learn what you can. Great volunteers maintain a high level of professionalism in all aspects of their work, paid or not.

STEP 4 >> Utilize your network

What organizations are you already familiar with? Have you donated money somewhere? Are there local organizations that have a great reputation in your community? These can be good places to start, especially if you are a first-time volunteer. When reaching out to volunteer organizations, professional correspondence, and much of the business world's correspondence, is now done via email. Keep the reason for your email clear and concise. Additionally, set your signature to something more professional that includes your full name, email address, a phone number where you can be reached and maybe even a physical address. If you receive a response to your email, be sure to read the response fully and answer it timely. If you cannot answer it right away, at least email the person and let them know that you received the email and that you are thinking of a response. ■

ROOTED

IN CULTURE

Written By: Libby Reilly

When Jacklyne Pham's parents moved to America from Vietnam in 1981, they were pregnant with Jacklyne and hoping to give their daughter a great life in America while still hanging on to their beloved Vietnamese culture. After the war, they first ended up in Honk Kong and then moved on Massachusetts, where Jacklyne's uncle lived.

With Massachusetts came opportunity, family, and, begrudgingly, lots of snow. So, Jacklyne and her parents moved once again to Southern California, where another piece of their family resided.

Today, Jacklyne still lives in Southern California, now with her husband and five-year-old son, and continues to keep the Vietnamese culture alive.

Part of the ideals that her parents instilled in Jacklyne were hard work and education. In 2007, Jacklyne enrolled at a state college in California, intending to go the biology or pre-pharmacy route, hoping to one day work in a medical setting.

"I lived 30 minutes away so I commuted through California traffic each day to school, sometimes the drive taking up to an hour and a half. It seems so silly to say but you spend a couple hundred dollars for a parking pass that doesn't even guarantee you a parking spot after that long drive. After a semester, I got fed up and decided that traditional school wasn't for me."

The parking and commuting woes weren't Jacklyne's only complaint about traditional, brick-and-mortar schooling.

"I realized trying to learn in a lecture hall just wasn't for me. I enjoy learning and I always want to gain knowledge in new areas but I realized I can't gain that from a monotone professor at the front of a classroom with a PowerPoint. I was getting Bs and Cs at that school and I knew I could do so much better."



That's when Jacklyne found Columbia Southern University and her "life changed completely." She decided that LifePace Learning was a good option for her and she was able to take courses she enjoyed and in which she excelled. She graduated in 2011 with her Bachelors of Science degree in Occupational Safety and Health and then again in 2016 with her Masters of Business Administration with a concentration in health care administration.

"I believe in CSU and I believe in the shift of education to many online curriculums. So many students will eventually be able to find their way back to school because it is becoming a more flexible presence in their daily lives."

Jacklyne has become known as the Referral Queen; she tells people about CSU everywhere she goes and has personally referred eight of her friends who have become CSU Knights, a few of whom have or are close to graduating.

"I clung to the Vietnamese culture and traditions. I like sharing this part of our culture with my son."

"I promised all of them I would attend their graduation ceremonies [in Orange Beach, Alabama]. It was such a rewarding trip for me to go receive my diploma and I wouldn't miss the milestone for my friends."

She also quickly found CSU's social media channels for students and alumni to interact with one another, including the Facebook student closed group.

"I felt like I was talking to and connecting with students all around the country. I've even connected with students from the Vietnam campus and I hope to visit it one day."

Jacklyne says she travels to Vietnam at least once a year and is very connected to her family and the culture there.

She was recently there for her grandmother's funeral and says she visits as often as she can. She strives to stay sharp in the language and while she can't write in Vietnamese very well, says she can get by when she is there. She says raising her son, Logan, in California, makes her grateful for the Vietnamese influence there and strives to immerse her son whenever she can.

"My brother and I are very different. We grew up together learning the same things but for some reason, I clung to the Vietnamese culture and traditions while he chose to become very Americanized. I like sharing this part of our culture with my son and visiting Vietnam as often as we can."

Jacklyne says she talks to her son in Vietnamese and believes being bilingual will be beneficial to him as he grows up. She keeps the traditions alive, especially in things like memorials, ancestry, and special dates and holidays.

"Lunar New Years has always stuck out to me and been one of my favorite parts of our culture. There are certain things you do and say before you carry on into the New Year."



Left: Jacklyne and her parents shortly after settling into life in America. Right: Jacklyne, her husband and son celebrating Lunar New Year 2017.

Jacklyne says she and her family get together for a truly traditional and festive Lunar New Year. They celebrate with a feast, give thanks to their ancestors for the blessings of the previous year and light incense candles and stay up late to greet the New Year. They ask their ancestors to protect them and give a successful, prosperous year ahead.

"We have many sayings and blessings we pass along to one another. If an uncle is single, for example, we wish for him to find a girlfriend in the New Year, and things like that."

Another favorite Lunar New Year tradition is the red envelope. This cultural practice has been alive for



generations and symbolizes luck and wealth. An older family member gives a sealed red envelope, filled with lucky money, to the younger family members. They exchange greetings of good advice and wisdom.

This Lunar New Year, Jacklyne celebrated with her husband and son in traditional Vietnamese clothing and rituals, but also included a trip to Disneyland.

"My son didn't like wearing the traditional outfit [Ao Dai] at first, but when he saw Mickey Mouse wearing the same thing, he was suddenly okay with it!"

Passing to her son the same traditions and culture that her parents passed to her is very important to Jacklyne. She plans to enroll her son in the only English/Vietnamese dual immersion school in California when he starts kindergarten next year.

Jacklyne says that most things she does are fueled by her desire to give her son the best life possible. She began studying for her master's degree when she was pregnant with him and when she was eight months pregnant, tragedy struck their family. Her brother-in-law was diagnosed with acute lymphoid leukemia and after a one-year battle, he died just a month before Jacklyne would give birth to his nephew.

"His cancer was rapid and we went through a process of trying to find a hospital that would accommodate him. There were no clinical medications to suppress the cancer and we were hopeful about a bone marrow transplant but the cancer came back within a month, that time it quickly spread to his brain. While visiting him in the hospital and seeing how everything worked to keep the operations of the hospital running smoothly, I decided I was interested in pursuing a degree in hospital management."

Throughout every experience, hardship, trip, and tradition, she hopes to stay true to her roots and bring honor to her family heritage.

Jacklyne realized she didn't do well with blood and that a degree in Occupational Safety and Health would be a good route for her.

"I figured if I could be working in some area of the medical field, setting standards, making changing, ensuring the environment was safe for the nurses, doctors, patients, and visitors, I would be doing something really good."

As life so often happens though, things didn't work out exactly as she planned. Jacklyne had her son and she and her husband started a business together, an IT company that hosts third party emails, survey lists, networking backups, and data recovery. This allows her to stay home with son, travel, but still have a hand in the medical field.

"A lot of clients are medical offices so I still feel like I get to play a small part in that."

Since she graduated, she has been taking time to destress and travel the world. She has been to Vietnam twice, Belize, and is set to visit Japan, Korea, Florence, and Rome.

"All of this travel was a little unexpected but I'm grateful for it. Belize was a girls' trip with a friend and Florence and Rome are a graduation gift from my husband."

When she settles back into life at home in Southern California, she plans to start working toward her doctorate degree. Eventually, she thinks she would like to teach.

Jacklyne has experienced a lot and does not plan on stopping anytime soon. Throughout every experience, hardship, trip, and tradition, she hopes to stay true to her roots and bring honor to her family heritage.

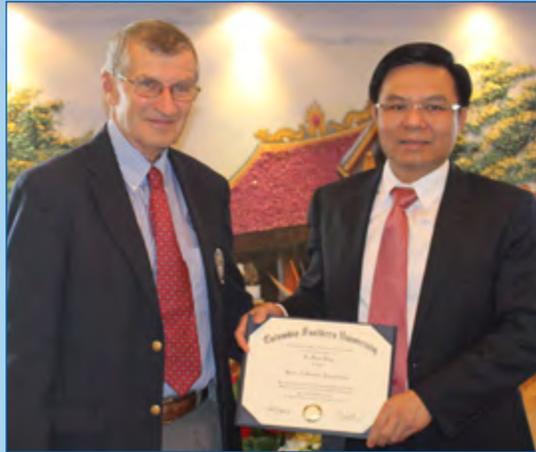
"Every person is incredibly unique. My culture is such a big part of who I am and I am grateful to pass that along to my son. CSU helped me gain confidence, skills and friendships that I could have never had anywhere else. I want to be able to pay that forward. I am a very proud Knight."

SEND US YOUR CSU STORY!

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“Dr. Hung is recognized as an outstanding and respected leader, not only in his company, but on a national scale.”



Dr. Le Manh Hung
CSU Vietnam MBA, Class of 2016

Dr. Le Manh Hung has served as vice president of Vietnam Oil and Gas Group (PetroVietnam) since September 2013. This is the largest petrol corporation in Vietnam. He is currently responsible for all aspects of the petroleum downstream sector of Petrovietnam, including refinery and petrochemical, chemical and biofuels projects. He works in strategy development, investments, operations, maintenance, and new project development.

Dr. Hung has also served as chairman of Long Son Petrochemical Company since 2014.

Dr. Hung worked many years in refinery, distribution and petrochemical industry. He took part in national projects, such as constructing and operating many large refinery and petrochemical plants in Vietnam.

Throughout his career, he has held a number of impressive leading positions: general director of Camau Fertilizer Company, general director of Ca Mau Gas-Power-Fertilizer Management Board, deputy director of Long Son Petrochemical Company, deputy director of Petroleum Processing Division of Petrovietnam, technical expert in Drilling Mud Company of Petrovietnam, and process engineer of Dung Quat refinery project. He also used to be the officer of Viet Nam Government office as petroleum stage management position.

Before applying to the CSU MBA program, Dr. Hung had previously earned a PhD. He found the CSU curriculum to be both flexible and beneficial to add to his repertoire in management. He graduated with his Masters of Business Administration degree from Columbia Southern University Vietnam program in September 2016. He finished with a 4.0 GPA.

Upon the completion of Dr. Hung’s degree, Dr. Joe Manjone, assistant provost for Special Programs at CSU, awarded Dr. Hung with his graduation honors.

“Having a private commencement ceremony for a corporate leader was a very unique experience, and one in which I got to know Dr. Hung and several of his colleagues. I found that Dr. Hung is recognized as an outstanding and respected leader, not only in his company, but on a national scale. It was truly an honor for me to present his diploma and welcome him as a CSU alumnus,” says Dr. Manjone.

Dr. Le Manh Hung also holds a PhD degree in chemistry from Hanoi University of Technology in Vietnam and he has also received various honors such as completion of the Global Leadership Development Program of Harvard, been named CEO from PACE Institute of Management, and was a guest speaker at Connecforce 2015, a large manufacturing and petrochemical conference in Vietnam. ■



Dr. Hung had previously earned a PhD. He found the CSU curriculum to be both flexible and beneficial to add to his repertoire in management.

THE ACCOMPLISHED LIFE

Written By:
Sonya Lavett



Like trying to hold sand, important moments, memories and triumphs are often times overlooked in an effort to quickly make the next deadline or appointment. With so much to do, it is challenging to find time to take a breath and reflect. Our schedules are packed.

Yet, when we do not take a moment to celebrate even the smallest of achievements, we are missing out on so much. Namely, a feeling of fulfillment at what all has transpired throughout the year.

If you were to write down everything that you had to do in a day or week, it would not seem possible to accomplish all of it. Yet, you do this every single day. You work hard at your job, take care of your family, volunteer your time and skills to your communities and still make time to strive for something better. You even take time to reach out through social media and show up at events and encourage one another along the way. You take time to connect with another. I am forever amazed at your spirit of giving.

This is what CSU is about; we help one another. As proud CSU Alumni, this spirit of giving back never stops evolving.

While we contribute every day to those around us and for a greater purpose, we sometimes forget to give some of that energy back to ourselves and reflect on our wins.

I will bet if you look back and begin writing down all that you accomplished in 2016, you will be shocked and amazed at all that you managed to do. Why is this important?

Just like creating goals for yourself and really stretching your skills and desires to improve in certain areas, keeping a list of accomplishments is all part of the reflection process. How will you be able to move forward without first truly understanding where you have been?



Develop an accomplishment list. This is not a to-do list; it is a compilation of your greatest moments and even some of the smaller things that may only matter to you. Putting professional and personal accomplishments all together, there is no need to come up with everything in one sitting. Think of this as a living list that you will continue adding to for the remainder of the year.



Celebrate what you have managed to do this year. Sometimes it is important to go beyond just checking a task off of your ever-growing to-do list. Actually dedicate some time to relish in the joy of being able to complete something. Invite your loved ones to participate in your success, no matter how seemingly insignificant. Then, pat yourself on the back for seeing that project or task through to the end.

Since past behavior is a pretty good indicator of future behavior, acknowledging what you have managed to achieve in 2016 will help motivate you for 2017 and beyond. What are you still working toward and what do you hope to accomplish or change in the future? Seeing where you have been and what you have been able to achieve will provide you with empowerment. You now have a visual of what you may not have thought possible before. Here

is your evidence that you are capable of progressing through even the most unsurmountable obstacles. Honor your hard work.



Disappointments. These are inevitable and part of life. The things we failed to do or do well are the things that can overrun our thoughts and get in the way of our happiness. In those moments where doubt and worry preoccupy your day, check out your accomplishments and take note of the larger picture. You are constantly striving toward a better you. It is typically those disappointments that help us grow into something much stronger and wiser.

Sometimes it is not necessarily about completing something tangible, such as an important proposal at work or completing a DIY project at home, although those items are certainly worthy of pride. For instance, what have you learned this year? If nothing else, are you more self-aware than you were last year or even a month ago? Did you have a breakthrough regarding a thought process or learn to break a bad habit?

These behaviors are sometimes taken for granted because they are more of a process and less of a definitive end point; yet, these achievements are the very things that make us stronger, wiser and healthier. You may not have perfected it yet, but the very fact that you are working toward becoming a better you is definitely worth celebrating.

Acknowledging what you have managed to achieve in 2016 will help motivate you for 2017 and beyond.

There are days when we give to everyone but ourselves. It can be a challenge to find the time to honor the dedication we have put forth toward something meaningful because we are so busy trying to meet our goals and take care of the necessities. It is easy to lose focus on the journey while we laser in on the outcome. This practice of noting your accomplishments, writing them down, and keeping them in a visible place will be a wonderful gift to yourself. Your living list will serve as a reminder of how wonderful you are, how hard you work and how much you have actually grown throughout the year. ■

Keep striving toward your dreams!



BECOME A PARTNER BUILD A FUTURE

Columbia Southern University offers companies, associations, municipalities and other agencies the opportunity to provide learning partner benefits to their employees and members. CSU offers a 10% tuition discount to partners' employees/members that extends to their spouses and children. CSU also offers exclusive scholarship opportunities for partners.

These exciting benefits come at no cost and can be obtained by signing a memorandum of understanding listing all benefits offered to the organization!

Becoming a CSU learning partner is easy and a great way to offer additional benefits to employees or members of your organization.



For more information on how your company or organization can become a CSU learning partner, visit ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Alumni-Partner or call **800.344.5021**.

THE COUPLE WHO STUDIES TOGETHER...

Written By: Libby Reilly

Kristine Morel

AA in General Studies, 2009
BS in Healthcare Administration, 2013
MBA/Project Management,
(expected graduation 2017)

Ernest Morel

AAS in Criminal Justice, 2012
BSBA/International Management, 2014
MBA/Project Management,
(expected graduation 2017)



Kristine and Ernest Morel met while serving in the military. Kristine grew up in a third world country where not everyone had the opportunity of education. Her parents embedded in her the importance of education and service, so it only seemed natural that she joined the military.

Ernest grew up in a poor community in Brooklyn, New York, where he witnessed drugs and crime around every corner. He knew that a good education would be his ticket out of that environment, so he joined the military to gain the life skills and career to go along with that education.

Kristine Morel began her online education in 2008. When her frustration about the inflexibility of her previous school grew, she overheard a coworker talking about CSU. She found that not only would her previous credit transfer, but her military experience would, as well.

"It turned out that CSU works perfect for a busy person like me and transferring to CSU was the best decision I made in my education."

Kristine finished her associates degree in 2009 and soon after, her husband Ernest decided to begin his studies at CSU.

"I was motivated to pursue my college degree by my wife, and she recommended CSU as the best school for our busy work schedule in the military and professional careers. Continuing our education has been the best decision, and CSU has made that possible with what they offer," said Ernest.

They both completed their associates and moved on to their bachelors, Kristine's in healthcare administration and Ernest's in business administration. They didn't stop there, either. They both began their master's degree program and will graduate this year.

Kristine and Ernest say that because of their busy schedules, they usually work on their studies independently when they can fit some time in between work and family commitments; however, they always take time to remind each other about the importance of finishing strong. They provide each other a fresh set of eyes to review papers or compare notes from similar courses.

“Our future goal is to get our doctoral degrees together...it would serve as a great example for our kids.”



“We are both competitive and challenge each other to see who gets higher grades throughout the course. We joke about who is better, but at the end of the day we find it exciting, fun and fulfilling to be able to go through this together and reach our educational goals.”

The couple says their goal is to finish their MBA programs and be the first in their families to receive a master’s degree. Once that is complete, they do not plan on resting.

“We would like to pursue our certifications (PMP, PMI, and Six Sigma black belt certifications) following our MBA. Having these certifications will help us in our careers by giving us a better advantage to get promoted to a higher position in our company. Our future goal is to get our doctoral degree together, which would not only be a significant lifetime achievement but would serve as a great example for our kids,” says Kristen.

Kristen and Ernest say having an Alma Mater in common with one another has been a wonderful thing to bring them even closer together.

“It is a great feeling knowing that we are representing a large community of other CSU alumni who have made this journey. We are here to enlighten others who are just starting in their journey and let them know that reaching your goals is possible if you don’t give up.”

Today, Kirstine and Ernest have triplets and life is anything but dull. Kristine and Ernest both work for Afton Chemical Corporation in Richmond, Virginia. Kristine is a chemical laboratory technician and conducts various tests and evaluates the lubricity and electronic conductivity of fuels. Ernest is a test coordinator where he manages the needs of internal and external customers in various programs and projects.

While serving, going to school, and working together, you would think the couple may wish for some time apart, but it is quite the opposite. They call each other their rock and turn to each other for support and motivation every day.

“He makes sure that I always remember my goals in life to finish school and become a role model to everyone, especially to our triplets,” says Kristine.

“Completing my MBA will be a highlight for my immediate family as this is the highest level of education achieved. I will bring pride to our family. My wife has been an incredible blessing and a balance to my life. She is able to anchor me down and keep my focus on my goals,” says Ernest. ■

A promotional banner for CSU merchandise. At the top right is a magnifying glass icon. Below it, the text "Get Your CSU Knight Gear" is displayed in a blue box. The main image shows a blue polo shirt hanging on a gold hanger. The shirt has a "KNIGHTS" tag and a crest on the chest. Below the image, the text "20% Discount on CSU Merchandise" is written in white. To the right is the Columbia Southern University logo, which includes a shield with a book and a torch. Below the logo, the word "BOOKSTORE" is written in large, bold, blue letters. To the left of the bookstore name, the text "DISCOUNT CODE: MODCO14" and "EXPIRES: 12/31/2017" is displayed. At the bottom right, the website "Bookstore.ColumbiaSouthern.edu" is listed.

SPREADING THE WORD THROUGH AMBASSADORSHIP

Written By: Amanda Manjone



When thinking about the many wonderful things about our university, the foremost thing that comes to mind is our alumni. Your stories continue to encourage and impress not only those who work at CSU, but your fellow classmates and alumni. We are able to hear them when you connect with us on social media, when you reach out to Career Services for assistance and when you attend our various regional social events. It is wonderful to continue our relationship with you and I want you to know we are always here for you.

Recently, we launched a new program called CSU Knight Ambassadors. This program is the result of all of your inspiring, unique journeys and your shared love of CSU.

The CSU Knight Ambassador program recognizes that you are great role models for current students and those considering enrolling but who may be intimidated or nervous. You have been in their shoes and know the satisfaction that comes with completing all of the hard work.

As one of our Ambassadors, Kenneth, stated, “CSU made it possible for me to get an education while serving two deployments, multiple training events, raising my family, and continuing my career. It has helped me stay relevant with my peers and has given me the confidence to keep going.”

We know that all of you are our best ambassadors because you can take firsthand knowledge of CSU to your hometown and into your professional and social network, and we hope you do!

Kenneth went on to say, “As CSU grows, I want to ensure the integrity of the program grows and the interest of my region grows, as well. I am tied to the reputation of this organization for life and I take that pretty seriously.”

So, what exactly does a CSU Knight Ambassador do?

It really depends on the time and commitment you are willing to make! Our Ambassadors may attend networking events and conferences on behalf of CSU, share their experience with future students, appear in CSU advertisements, or promote the university in their workplace or community. In return, our Ambassadors will be eligible for the Distinguished Alumni Award, an annual award given to an alumni for their service to the university. Ambassadors also receive some cool CSU swag and a certificate. Most importantly, Ambassadors have the opportunity to connect with fellow Knights and other professionals in their industry through networking and events. The main core value of CSU is to help change lives and we want you to change them with us.

As Ambassador Ethan describes, “When I found CSU, I had little desire to return to school. [It ended up being] the best decision of my life. I have really found my place here at CSU and I am striving in my program of study. CSU changed my life and I want others to experience this remarkable university, as well. I want to be a Knight Ambassador because I am living proof that Columbia Southern University changes lives and I want to share that with everyone!”



Of course, we realize that we need to help you before you can help us and we are always here to assist in any way we can. Maybe you are on the quest for an advanced degree or need help preparing for an interview. Reach out to us and access our knowledgeable staff and helpful resources! If you are interested in more information or on becoming a CSU Knight Ambassador, please visit columbiasouthern.edu/alumni. ■



Written By: Nikkia Fain
Class of 2013 and Class of 2017

I am a retired Air Force veteran. I served 21 years and it was not until I found CSU that I was able to accomplish my goal... receive a bachelor's degree!

After receiving my associate's degree in logistics through the Community College of the Air Force, I did not know what I could do or what school I should attend to move towards my goal of attaining my bachelor's degree.

I was clueless because I was an active member of the military and had tried to attend college on base or in the local area of the base where I was stationed; however, my career was number one. I was asked to work different shifts, deploy, was assigned to a temporary duty (TDY), work long hours including weekend duties, so I was lost. I had to drop classes because of unpredictable work patterns.

Did I mention that I am married with children and at one time was a single parent during all of this?

Thanks to the Associates to Bachelorette Cooperative (AU-ABC) program that was offered and the affiliation it had with CSU, I found the perfect fit. Through AU-ABC, I had the chance to research schools that were a part of the program to see what the best fit for me in conjunction with my Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC). I was a material manager and my work seemed to cross over well in the business world.

I then began to pursue my search for colleges that offered business degrees. I looked at college after college and what was offered did not fit my needs for several reasons; however, I finally discovered CSU and

their online business program. Not only was it flexible, there was also a guarantee that most, if not all, of my Air Force technical training and previous college credits would transfer.

I chose to utilize the LifePace Learning option to allow a more flexible avenue for me to pursue my degree with zero interruptions.

I started CSU as a sophomore and graduated in less than three years. In those three years, I moved a couple of times, changed shifts, went TDY and deployed. I still was able to graduate on time. After receiving my bachelor's degree in business, I continued my education in the MBA Human Resources Management program at CSU. I am currently three classes away from earning my MBA.



My transition from the military to the civilian world was easy (mentally). I served 21 years so I was ready to transition into the civilian world; however, I am not currently working and have been searching for a job in my area. I retired in Goldsboro, North Carolina, the location of my final duty station. I have been searching for and am confident I will soon find a new career that is closely related to the business and logistics I learned both in the military and through my studies. ■

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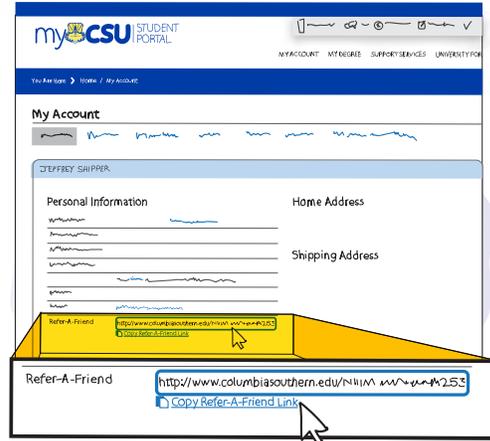
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REFER A FRIEND



1 Jeff goes to CSU and wants to share his experience with a friend.



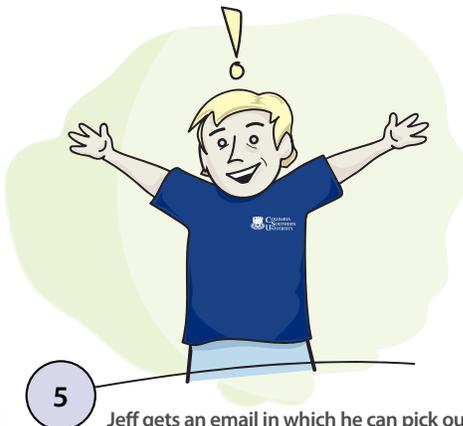
2 Jeff logs into his myCSU portal and copies his unique Refer-a-Friend link.



3 Jeff pastes his unique link in an email and sends it to his friend, Claire.



4 Claire opens Jeff's referral link and fills out a CSU information request form.



5 Jeff gets an email in which he can pick out his official CSU Refer-A-Friend t-shirt



6 Jeff is shipped his new shirt and Claire gets the opportunity for continued education at CSU!



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Visit www.ColumbiaSouthern.edu/friend to refer your friends to CSU so they can reach their educational dreams—just as you did!

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